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# Reds Free Fliers

## —Claim Spy Data

### THE AIRMEN

By Myron Kandel  
Of The Herald Tribune Staff  
BONN.

Two American fliers, held captive by Soviet forces for 17 days after their RB-66B reconnaissance plane was shot down over East Germany, were released yesterday.

As the two men were handed over to United States authorities, official Soviet and East German statements said investigation of the plane's wreckage—presumably meaning its photographic equipment and film—"established, beyond a doubt" that its mission was spying.

The fliers—with whom the U. S. Air Force says it lost radio contact, perhaps because of Communist jamming—were said to have admitted, under interrogation that they were in steady contact with U. S. bases and "knew where they were throughout the entire flight." The U. S., the statements said, had expressed regret over the incident and promised to avoid further "transgressions."

### GRIM-FACED

In Washington, Secretary of State Dean Rusk repeated the U. S. stand that the RB-66B had strayed over East Germany by mistake. Mr. Rusk said he knew of no deals or conditions surrounding the fliers' release.

The two airmen, Capt. David I. Holland, 35, of Holland, Mich., pilot of the downed plane, and Capt. Melvin J. Kessler, 30, of Philadelphia, navigator, crossed into West Germany in a U. S. Army sedan at the Helmstedt frontier checkpoint. They were smartly searched by a detail of Soviet troops at the border crossing, which, ordi-

ONLY ONE AMERICAN now remains in an East German prison. He is Frederic Loba, 36, of Altadena, Calif., sentenced to 2½ years last October for helping refugees flee to freedom. The three American fliers are free—and so is a Jackson Heights opera singer who was in a Red jail for 20 months. Her return was another strange chapter in the shadowy story of Iron Curtain hostages. Secretary of State Rusk said yesterday that the straying off course of the fliers' plane was "mysterious." So was the simultaneous release of the forgotten singer.

### IN THE CITY AND STATE—

Q "Spy" mystery. Only 36 hours after release from an East Berlin prison, opera singer Gabrielle Hammerstein was sitting at home in Jackson Heights in fine fettle despite 19 months incarceration on charges of being a spy. Details were vague, but she was arrested January, 1962 (she lived in West Berlin) when she drove into the Eastern (Communist) Zone. She was released as inexplicably as she was arrested. The overall puzzle: Why is Soviet Russia releasing Americans charged as spies?

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### SINGER, TOO

By Maurice C. Carroll  
Of The Herald Tribune Staff

Mysteriously arrested in East Berlin as a "spy" for the West. Tried in secret. A captive 27 months. Freed as mysteriously as she was arrested.

At home yesterday in Jackson Heights, Queens, less than 36 hours after her release, buxom Gabrielle Hammerstein, 39, told about her chilling experience in booming good spirits that seemed somehow as strange as her mysterious reticences.

"I was a lousy prisoner," she said with a deep chuckle. "They told me I was the worst thing they ever encountered."

"I refused to work—to aid the Communist system."

"I refused to eat potatoes—they were pretty rotten—even though our diet was mostly liquid, and there were some days when we had the same soup all three meals."

### CHEERFUL

She talked for reporters and TV cameras with great good cheer. An opera soprano, she even roared out a few sample notes from "Die Valkyrie" that shoved the needle on a sound man's gauge out of sight.

But the story she told in those cheerful tones was of strange and sometimes brutal imprisonment and it was laced with areas of "no comment" to protect, she said, prisoners still in Communist hands who were "fighting for our way of life."

Someone ventured the belief that most people arrested as spies have actually been spying. Was she a spy?

"No comment," said Miss Hammerstein mysteriously.

Her whole story, and it

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